

MOD'S RESPONSE

Right Reverend, Your Grace, fellow commissioners and honoured guests... I still can't quite believe how, why, what was the committee of fifteen thinking? I will never forget the interview... I thought it was a disaster but the journey home was horrendous and then to take a call from Iain Greenshields which I thought was 'thanks but no thanks'... and his words were 'are you sitting down?' Yes, I replied, I'm driving home. 'Well, at least you're sitting; congratulations'. / Sally, when you make a similar call this autumn to my successor, please make sure they are not driving! /

I feel very humbled that you have elected me as your Moderator. I have served the church in various capacities over the years and all that has been documented in the various interviews published since I was announced as Mod Des, which is the way one is referred to until formally elected. I have negotiated a four way union and there are more changes for me locally – so neither I nor my parish are immune from parish planning... and so I am very conscious of how we need to build together (my theme for the year). And while every situation is different, I know something of what congregations the length and breadth of the country are facing.

This is a tremendous honour and I promise that I will serve you to the best of my ability. The church is facing some huge challenges and as Moderator I am conscious that I must remain neutral, but I will listen, I will be there and I will care. I also offer the church such gifts and abilities that have sustained me in ministry so far - and in doing so I thank my congregation (I've been in the same charge for 33 years) for teaching me the ropes, and for being patient, for forgiving my mistakes, for putting up with my silly jokes and my wind-ups, and for letting me go for a year - and to the many who have made the journey through this morning (maybe to make sure they really are getting rid of me for a year). And, of course, I wouldn't be who I am without the family... I owe them everything. They've put up with a lot over the years and they are the ones who pick me up when I need encouragement, and keep my feet firmly on the ground. To them, I say – this honour is as much there's as mine – thank you./

A week of business lies before us. A year of commitments lies ahead... thank you, again, for electing me and please pray for me and for the church.

Let me finish by quoting His Grace on his recent appointment as colonel to the Scots Guards... "I accept with a degree of trepidation as I will undoubtedly be measured against the formidable record and reputation of my predecessor (and in my case predecessors). I can only promise to do my best'. Thank you.

